The Lesson of Captain Dreyfus

—William Clancy

THE

Commonweal

Crisis in Afghanistan

by Christopher Rand

A Life for a Life?

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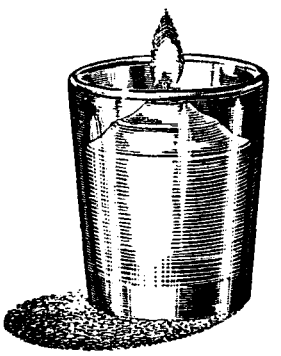

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THE COMMONWEAL
386 FOURTH AVENUE
NEW YORK 16

Editor
EDWARD S. SKILLIN

Managing Editor
JAMES O'GARA

Associate Editor
WILLIAM CLANCY

Assistant Editor
JAMES FINN

Contributing Editors
PHILIP BURNHAM
JOHN C. CORT
ANNE FREMANTLE
PHILIP T. HARTUNG
RICHARD HAYES

JOHN BRUBAKER: *Advertising Manager*

Entered as second-class matter at the post office at Orange, Conn., under the act of March 3, 1879. Published weekly, printed and copyrighted 1954, in the U. S. A. by the Commonweal Publishing Co., Inc., 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y., MUrray Hill 3-9685.

U. S. and Canada, $7.50 a year. Foreign, $9.50. Single copies 20¢

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The
Commonweal
week by week

Our Debt to President Eisenhower

IT is almost impossible to imagine Dwight D. Eisenhower as a Frenchman, an Italian, an Englishman, for his image is essentially an American one, and to the American people he seems to embody the ideas and ideals thought of as particularly a part of our national heritage. Thus when Mr. Eisenhower searched his mind for a symbol of fair play it was typical that he should think of Wild Bill Hickok; the master of twentieth century military strategy, he is also America's link with the frontier and our less complicated past. Yet, American though he is, not only the United States but the world was sobered by the news of his grave illness, and that this was so is a measure, not only of America's role in world affairs, but of the man himself. For in the last two years Dwight D. Eisenhower has become a symbol of humanity's universal hunger for peace and elemental decency, and it is here that he has been making his great contribution.

In the past, this magazine has sometimes agreed with and sometimes criticized Mr. Eisenhower's policies. We do not share his generally conservative approach to matters like public power and labor legislation; on foreign affairs, although we rejoice that the immediate threat of nuclear catastrophe seems to be lessened, we also have very real reservations about the approach Mr. Eisenhower employed at Geneva. If the President were, almost miraculously, to regain his strength, we would undoubtedly continue the policy of critical evaluation that is an important part of our function. But we would also continue to recognize his unique, historic role. As President, Mr. Eisenhower has been successful in coping with the extremist elements inside his own Party to a degree we would two years ago have thought impossible, and he has been able, almost single-handed, to restore a great measure of sanity and plain decency to our national political debate. One may disagree often with his specific legislative proposals, as we do, but he does stand for honesty, decency and fair play at home and for conciliation and negotiation abroad. These are, surely, no small things, and the editors of this magazine join our fellow citizens in acknowledging the nation's debt to Dwight D. Eisenhower and in asking God's blessing for him in the crucial weeks ahead.

PATRIOTISM AND RELIGION III

DURING September The Commonweal carried on an editorial discussion with the St. Louis *Register* concerning the complex subject of "Patriotism and Religion." In the discussion The Commonweal attempted to explain its belief that there is no *essential* relationship between the two: "good citizenship," we maintained, "carries no religious test, nor does sanctity wear a badge of nationalism." The St Louis paper, on the other hand, held to its position that religion is the indispensable prerequisite of good citizenship: without religion, the *Register* argued, no reasonable patriotism is possible.

At no point was this discussion a "tangle," as one Catholic paper most inaccurately described it. It was, rather, an attempt by two Catholic publications to explore a difficult question together and to reconcile, if possible, their conflicting points of view. We are grateful to the *Register* for its courtesy in this debate, and we think that the way the debate has been carried on holds encouraging signs for the Catholic press.

In its September 16 issue the *Register* has commented extensively on the positions previously set forth in this magazine, and it has again raised questions about The Commonweal's attitudes toward Secularism. "To avoid the charge of Secularism and philosophical indifferentism," the St. Louis paper writes, "we think [The Commonweal] should state its position concerning the positive relation-

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ship between civil activity and religion." And the *Indiana Catholic and Record* has joined the discussion with its September 16 issue, in which it attempts (we think with considerable success) to mediate the issues between The Commonweal and the *Register*.

The editorials from both the St. Louis and the Indianapolis papers are reprinted in this issue of The Commonweal under the heading "Of Note." We will here attempt to deal with the major points they raise, and at the same time to round out our part of the discussion by stating our position on those "positive" aspects the *Register* asks about. We have no illusion that what we say can be final. We merely hope we have made some beginning toward clarifying an important point.

WHEN we wrote that there is no *essential* relationship between patriotism and religion we were thinking of immediate things—of this man, here and now, who has no religion but is a "good" citizen, and of this other man who fails as a citizen even though he is supported by the guarantees of religion. We were protesting a facile identification (too often made in the Catholic press) of the two virtues; we were protesting also a confusion of religion with some form of nationalism. Both of these protests we would let stand. We would continue to insist that religion is no guarantor of good citizenship in any concrete instance, and that the non-religious man, as a citizen, may often put his believing neighbor to shame. But, having said this, we agree with the *Register* that we have not said enough. What do we think is the *positive* relationship between patriotism and religious belief?

In a previous editorial we wrote of the terrible tendency of the conservative world to link the defense of its material interests with the defense of religion, and of the correspondingly terrible tendency of the religious world to link the defense of spiritual values with the defense of particular temporal orders. Here we would observe another tendency, equally terrible: the tendency of the Liberal world to build a wall of total separation between the temporal and the religious orders and thus to make religion a completely private affair, a matter of no concern to the State and one which must have no influence on the State's affairs.

This third tendency (visible everywhere around us today) is what The Commonweal understands by Secularism, and our attitude toward it should be plain, because we have opposed it for over thirty years. During the entire time of its existence The Commonweal has insisted on the relevance of religion to social-political questions. When it ceases to insist on this, it will have lost its reason for being.

And yet, The Commonweal has insisted on other things too—among them the fact that no easy application of general truths to particular situations is possible. Theory must not contradict verifiable experience. It is one thing to hold that adherence to a system of unchangeable moral absolutes offers the only *long-range* guarantee of good government; it is another thing to speak as though, in any here-and-now situation, a man must accept the theory underlying such a system in order to act as a good citizen.

Now, it is in a sense true, as Jacques Maritain says in that passage which the *Indiana Catholic and Record* quotes, that "democracy is linked to Christianity and the democratic impulse has arisen in human history as a temporal manifestation of the inspiration of the Gospel." But it is true only if certain important historical qualifications are made.

Democracy, as we know it in the West today, is a most complex historical phenomenon. Its roots lie in various causes, and men from radically opposed philosophical schools have contributed to its present structure. In St. Thomas Aquinas we find justification for some of democracy's most important principles, but we find justification for other of its principles in the works of agnostics and deists.

The democratic impulse, at least ideally, is certainly linked to the inspiration of the Gospel, but who could maintain that it was largely Catholics who fought for democracy as we know it against the politically authoritarian powers of the world? Unfortunately, Catholics by and large have too

NEXT WEEK

GUNNAR D. KUMLIEN supplies an explanation of the strength of Polish Catholic resistance.

"Exactly as has happened in other Communist countries, Communism seems to have acted like a gigantic plow overturning lots of things and destroying inestimable values. Yet at the same time it seems to have prepared the field for the harvest in an extraordinary way. The individual Pole has been compelled to take a position. He is no longer able to afford the luxury of standing aside and ignoring the great problems—life after death, our origin, what is right and what is wrong. Communism has brutally caught him by the collar and imposed its *weltanschauung*, saying "This is Truth!" He has been compelled either to agree and justify such agreement within himself or to disagree and justify in the same way his open or secret disagreement. . . ."

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often been identified with authoritarian forces and have had to be dragged unwillingly into a democratic world, muttering darkly all the while that liberty leads to license.

It would be pleasant if, in the face of history, we Catholics could maintain that the democratic world is our invention; unfortunately we cannot. What then can we maintain in working out a positive relationship between patriotism and religion?

We can maintain, with force and conviction, that the monolithic Liberal State offers as great threats to man's freedom and dignity as did any authoritarian *ancien régime*. We can justly point to what horrors a Rousseauistic conception of Man and the State may lead. We can argue, as the *Register* does, that in the long run the only rational basis for good citizenship lies in the majesty of unalterable moral imperatives. Without the immutable principles of the natural law there are, indeed, no guarantees against the concentration camps of our century. The Church and the State must always be friends; Christians must constantly assert spiritual values in the social-political world. But the religious and temporal orders must be kept distinct too, and their functions must not be confused. From such confusion some of the worst tragedies in the world's sad history have ensued.

NEW SLATE

THE possibility that in their anti-Perón enthusiasm the Argentine people will push rapidly toward full-fledged political democracy was somewhat dimmed the very first week. The new leader, General Lonardi, has himself inspired wider hopes. The predominance of civilians in his provisional government, his emphatic pledge of "rule by law" and his announced plan of national elections within a practicable interval have boded well. In view of his espousal of the democratic freedoms, the warmth of his welcome by the people of Buenos Aires served as an auspicious omen.

But the scope of the job that immediately confronts the new government is signalized by the agreement the General has now made with the Peronist General Confederation of Labor—not to mention the lack of deference toward the new President in the union's historic broadcast. If most of the concessions granted the union had to do specifically with its own status and protection, they also included a promise that the executive branch of the Lonardi Government would not intervene to take the once eminent *La Prensa* from the Confederation and restore it to the owners from whom Perón had wrested it. This probably reflects the comparative weakness of the new regime rather than insincerity about freedom of the press.

When the fallen dictator, protected on the tiny Paraguayan gunboat by "the right of asylum," set out on his interrupted river journey to Asunción, he left his country a shambles. In less than a decade he had brought a prosperous nation to the verge of bankruptcy, severely impaired the value of its currency, brought on wholesale official corruption and even religious persecution. One by one he had destroyed such institutions as Argentina's notable judiciary, its renowned free press and its leading universities; to rebuild them will require years. The fact that the Peronists still constitute much the strongest single political group in Argentina today gives some idea of present obstacles.

Unhappily, in recent years it was a regime such as this which our diplomacy has been supporting. To follow up diplomatic recognition with a new ambassador is therefore the least we can do to manifest our sympathy with the provisional regime. And then in the matter of loans, economic aid, conditions for our private investors and all sorts of commercial and cultural interchange we shall have to go several steps beyond what we proferred in the last years of the unlamented Juan Perón.

RELIGION IN POPULAR CULTURE

FOR those who put their faith in statistics, the *Yearbook of American Churches for 1956* has some heartening information. A greater proportion of Americans attend church today than ever before. Within the last fifteen years the number of church-goers has gone from approximately forty-nine per cent to sixty per cent of the total population. This is a substantial increase and another indication of the increasing attention given to religion in American life.

We welcome real achievements in the religious life of America, but our enthusiasm based upon statistical inquiry is tempered by a glance at the services into which our "religious revival" is being pressed. Not long ago we were presented with a spate of books which suggested—in tone when not in statement—that all the temporal ills that man is heir to could be vanquished by an easy reliance upon generally accepted religious principles. Contented and peaceful, we could all be happy, well-adjusted yea-sayers.

The movie industry, alert to man's desire, fed his new-found interest in the early history of Christianity, and we were privileged to see the forces of good and evil drawn up in all the militant array of technicolored cinemascope. A typical production:

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the handsome hero, privileged by his sins—tantalizing and titillating—to know the forces of evil, and torn between his desire for a lightly clad pagan wench and allegiance to the new truths, succumbs to the latter. The conflict is fascinating, the decision anti-climactic. The moral we decline to spell out.

Our songwriters have also felt the effects of religion and have responded valiantly. One of their most recent assaults goes something like this: "Have faith, hope and charity,/ That's the way to live successfully./ How do I know?/ The Bible told me so." When the theological virtues are so readily enlisted on the side of the man most likely to succeed, we are haunted by the uneasy suspicion that something is awry. And the suspicion is not removed by the happy insistence of the jukebox.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century a prominent Englishman was able to say: "No one admires Christianity more than I do, but when it interferes with one's personal life it's going too far." We have outgrown such simplicities; religion is not so neatly catalogued and filed. It will manifest itself in every area of man's existence. But in the adulterated, distorted fashion we have recently noticed it will accomplish nothing. We remain somewhat jaundiced concerning such manifestations of "religious" interest.

HENRY WALLACE ON FOOD

AFTER the debacle suffered by political prophets in 1948, we normally would hesitate to predict the reaction of the American voter. But in view of his role as head of the abortive Progressive Party ticket, we feel reasonably safe in predicting that Henry A. Wallace's political future is all behind him. Nevertheless, traces of the old magic that once made him an international political figure are still there. Witness his recent reaction to the announcement by the Department of Agriculture that it costs the United States almost one million dollars a day simply to store our five billion dollar stock of surplus foods. Mr. Wallace ignored technical problems and went right to the heart of the matter; his formula was simplicity itself—and, we think, hard to argue with.

Give the food away, Mr. Wallace said; use the surplus where it is needed instead of storing it. Feed the thousands of Americans who do not now receive enough nourishment and cannot buy more; distribute our surplus abroad with a liberal hand, especially in those areas hit hard by famine and natural disasters. Just as an example, he pointed out that the island of Haiti is suffering right now from famine; some twenty thousand Haitians are reportedly starving to death, and aid is meager and slow. If the former Vice President had his way, he would cut the red tape and give the Haitians all they need from our surplus.

Many economists would undoubtedly take exception to Mr. Wallace's plan. They would point out the dangers of upsetting the agricultural market here at home, and they would remind us that it is not easy to give food away abroad without wrecking the food-selling economy of some other country. But if it came to a contest we have little doubt that the people of the world would choose Mr. Wallace's approach to that of the technicians who say his solution is impossible. People who know hunger will never admit that it is impossible to give food to people when the food is there at hand, ready for the giving. In this matter, we think the wisdom of the simple is in the end bound to prevail, and it is up to America to help in seeing that it does.

OPENING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

CONTROVERSY as to the true outcome of Chancellor Adenauer's Moscow visit continues unabated. If it is hardly the "triumph" acclaimed by our State Department, neither does it appear to be the abysmal failure which it was tabbed by its grimmest critics. Much now depends upon the German foreign office. It was clearly a tactical mistake for the German delegation to set out for Moscow assuring the world how tough it was going to be, for that meant that something had to be brought back to Bonn at any hazard—and the pressure to secure the release of some nine thousand compatriots must have been considerable. The verbal promise for their release was indeed little enough to concede in return for an establishment of full-fledged diplomatic relations.

Perhaps the latter was inevitable, but already the leader of Adenauer's Free Democrat supporters is calling for revision of the treaties that link his country with the West. As against this danger, which will be greatly enhanced by the new channels for direct negotiations, Mr. Adenauer's expressly reserving his position on recognizing East Germany and his leaving out the latter on the prisoner question seem minor considerations indeed.

This week James Finn joins The Commonweal as an assistant editor. Mr. Finn has been serving as a member of the faculty of the College at the University of Chicago, as a lecturer at the Sheil School of Social Studies and as an associate editor of the Chicago Review. *We are happy to welcome him to our editorial staff.*

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Crisis in Afghanistan

"WHEN AFGHANS FEEL LONELY AND BITTER, THEIR THOUGHTS CAN ROAM NORTH TO RUSSIA"

CHRISTOPHER RAND

THE other day in New Delhi an Englishman, a former colonel with long service on the Northwest Frontier, told me of a fight there in his time between some Afghan tribesmen. It had been over a glass of water, he said, and five of the tribesmen had lain dead when it was finished. He added that the weather had been hot and tempers short, but even so he thought the incident bespoke a recklessness in the Afghan nature. He feared this trait could make a world war out of the current Afghan-Pakistan feud.

"They are good chaps up there, but ignorant," he said. "They think they can beat the world. Some Afghan is likely to get killed in the excitement, and then they will start fighting Pakistan. Then America and Russia will have to come in, and we can't stay out either. India can't stay out, even if she thinks she can. No one can stay out in the end."

Afghanistan may, in fact, be Asia's worst danger-spot now. Formosa is a more talked-of one, but there the choice of peace or war lies with the Chinese, who are not famous for dying needlessly. In their quarrels, personal or national, the Chinese often say they will go to desperate lengths, but usually—according to those who know them—they say so before bystanders who can stop the fight. This seems to be their line with Formosa now.

The Afghans are different, apparently. Hard-riding, gun-toting Central Asians, still partly nomadic, they have long been used to blood feuds and are fond of saying they "know how to die." They *do* die too, relatively often, over points of honor that others might think trivial.

THE Afghan-Pakistan trouble—essentially a border dispute on the Northwest Frontier—is minimized by the Pakistanis and ignored by most of the world. Yet its locale is a key one, according to geopoliticians. Afghanistan lies on the old invasion route from Central Asia to India—or, in modern terms, the "Indo-Pakistan Subcontinent." Alexander, Genghis Khan and the Moguls all passed through it on their way to the Indus Plain. Many others did too. It is the only land route for such invasion that has ever worked well.

Most of India's north frontier is shielded by the Himalayas and Tibetan Plateau, which have never been crossed by a big expedition. But the route through Afghanistan is well worn. Conquerors from the north —from above the Oxus, in what is now Russian Central Asia—had to cross the Hindu Kush, a complex wall of sheer brown rock, nine thousand and more feet high, before they were really inside Afghanistan. After that they could rest on the green plains near Kabul, the modern Afghan capital, before descending on the Indus through the Northwest Frontier passes, of which the Khyber is best known. This itinerary became a routine.

When the British finished conquering India, in the mid-nineteenth century, they decided that expansive Czarist Russia would try to follow the routine too, by historical destiny. Thus, they figured, she could link her Central Asian holdings with a warm-water port—perhaps at the mouth of the Indus, near the present Pakistani capital of Karachi. The British developed their Afghan policy to stop Russia from trying this. They made Afghanistan herself into a buffer, and they fortified the Northwest Frontier so as to keep her that way. This was the heart of Victorian strategy and politics in the region, whose details were sung by Kipling.

Now Britain is gone, of course, and Russia is Communist, not Czarist. But the memory lingers on. And Afghanistan has a bigger role in the drama, having come out of enforced bufferdom to relative freedom.

BRITAIN'S buffer policy threw Afghanistan out of step with the times and out of touch with her neighbors. All the British Central Asian buffers of that period—we can see now in hindsight—were sadly retarded and isolated. Tibet and Nepal are other examples. The idea was to keep them still—to guard them from outside influence and to discourage change within them—so they would supply a belt of tran-

Mr. Rand has written for the *New Yorker*, *Holiday*, and other magazines.

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quility between India and her two potential Asian rivals, Russia and China. This they did, but meanwhile they gained little experience of the world, with its rapid changes; and their own economies were held in a primitive state while nearby ones progressed. Nepal is now infinitely backward compared to India. Tibet is backward compared to China. And Afghanistan is backward—pathetically so—compared to Pakistan.

She is, furthermore, still trying to go it alone, unlike the other buffers. Soon after the British had gone Tibet was taken over by China, and in effect Nepal was taken over by India. Their statecraft, fundamentally, was taken out of their own untutored hands, and their economies were meshed into bigger ones. The Indians are developing Nepal considerably now, and the Chinese, so far as one can learn, are developing Tibet. But Afghanistan is still free and uncommitted, though backward.

She has been running what seems like an independent and self-respecting policy, to date, in the UN, and in gatherings like the recent Asian-African Conference at Bandung. She seems to favor international unions, and to wish them well, perhaps because of her isolation; no country needs a sound world order more than she does.

Her economic backwardness must be seen to be believed. Afghanistan is a beautiful land, rather like our Western mountain states—Nevada, for instance. She has beautiful mountains, beautiful clear air and beautiful horses—better than those of any other country now, perhaps. Yet she has no surfaced roads, and the main highway to Kabul is only a track—often washed out in flood season—over the dirt and rocks. Many Afghans go in rags, and one gathers that only great fortitude sees them through the bitter winters. (The Kabul schools take their long vacations in the winter, so the students won't have to endure the frigid classrooms then.)

AFGHANISTAN is a tough, backward mountain country, and as usual in such cases her people have the name of Dead End Kids among their richer neighbors. The British fought the Afghans in three Afghan Wars and conceived a hostility toward them that still endures. Readers who wish a sample of it should look up *The Ballad of the King's Mercy* and *The Ballad of the King's Jest*, by Kipling. These tales, superb as such, concern honored Afghan kings, and they portray the utmost in Oriental cruelty. This note recurs often in Kipling. In British memory the Afghans are real villains—they and their Afghan knives.

The Afghans accuse the British of teaching this hostility to the Pakistanis, and if an outsider may say so it appears that the latter, for all their noble qualities in other respects, do take a rather purse-proud line about the Afghans. They describe them as hopelessly unpunctual and inefficient, and they cite their poverty —their lack of roads, clothes etc.—as proof of these vices, forgetting momentarily how much of their own—Pakistan's—relative wealth came from British conquest and development.

The Pakistani judgment of Afghanistan colors that of many Americans too; Pakistanis are relatively Westernized, and are apt to speak good English, and by and large they have more influence on Americans than the Afghans do. This is true even in Kabul, the Afghan capital, where Pakistani diplomats are popular and where U.S. officials often have Pakistani servants. As a result of such attitudes the Afghans feel isolated by the West, and picked on, and they resent it in the manner of poor mountaineers the world over.

WHEN Afghans feel lonely and bitter, their thoughts can roam north to Russia. This is especially true now, for Russia is in business as the economic developer of Central Asia. She has invested a good deal, by all reports, in her own Central Asian regions—the Kazak, Kirghiz, Tadjik, Turkmen and Uzbek S.S.R's. She may not have brought much comfort to the consumers there yet, but at least she has created employment and changed the landscape a bit, making a contrast to Afghanistan below the Oxus.

She has also descended on Afghanistan itself, with offers of economic aid something like a Point Four program, in our terminology. Within the past year she has undertaken to surface some roads in Afghanistan, to build some gasoline tanks and grain elevators, and to put in at least one gasoline pipeline. One hears that she is willing to do a good deal more—that she is out for economic influence on a big scale.

The Afghans are going along—part way at least—with this ambition, if such it is. There is said to be a split in the Afghan Royal Family on the question—one group favoring more Russian aid, another favor-

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ing less. Perhaps there is a split in the Afghan mind as a whole, if one can speak of such a thing. The Afghans are conservative Muslims, and many of them are said to dislike what they hear about Russian Central Asia. But they know their country is poor. They can't refuse aid lightly, and they can't risk offending their big neighbor—they have, for instance, cut off American oil-exploration arrangements at Russian insistence. So if Russia wants to flirt, the Afghans seem bound to reciprocate, whether from weakness, poverty, or just a perverse interest in the Western reaction.

FINALLY we come back to the Afghan quarrel with Pakistan, in which defeat would be so humiliating —worse than death, if one knows how to die—worse even, perhaps, than alliance with a Godless neighbor who could turn the tide.

Pakistanis allege that the Russians are mindful of this opening in the Afghan mentality and are primed to take advantage of it. A Pakistani diplomat said last fall that the Russian embassy in Kabul is well staffed with experts in the dialects of Pushtoo, the language of the Northwest Frontier where the Pak-Afghan feud is centered. He implied that these experts were ready at hand for intrigue.

Then this spring, when the Pak-Afghan feud was burning high, there were hints from Afghan sources in London, Karachi and Kabul that Russian help would be sought if things went badly—even, indeed, that the help had been agreed on by the two countries already, in a sort of military pact. The hints did not last well on the record—their outlines being soon lost in a haze of rumors and denials characteristic of Afghan news—but they showed an Afghan tendency to rely on Russia in threats at least, if not as yet in deeds.

Russia didn't state her attitude then, and one can only guess at it. Backing one side in a Muslim feud is an old Russian device in Central Asia, under the Czars and Communists both. And for her to dominate Afghanistan now would make a breach—between Iran and Pakistan—in the anti-Communist bloc congealing on her south border. It might even lead her to warm water eventually, via Pakistan, if the feud developed that way. Perhaps all this appeals to her.

On the other hand she may be wary of the feud's explosive quality. If it turned into a real war it could hardly be peripheral from her view, like the Korean one. She may be very conscious of this. She has apparently done nothing provocative to show that she is not.

THE issues of the Pak-Afghan feud itself are obscure, if colorful. The trouble goes back to the old, unceasing warfare between the British and the tribesmen of the Northwest Frontier, who are variously called Pathans, Pakhtoons or Pushtoons.

These tribesmen are perhaps the toughest and most warlike mountaineers in existence, and as a whole they never submitted to British rule. Their home is the mountains between Pakistan and Afghanistan—as these countries are shown on our maps—and they make up a sizable share of the population in each. By and large they belonged to the Afghan "nation"—if that word is applicable—when the British came on the scene; they more or less owed allegiance, that is, to the Afghan amir in Kabul. Britain set out to alienate the more easterly Pathans from this bond by force and bribery, and eventually she imposed on Afghanistan the so-called Durand Line, an arbitrary frontier high in the hills.

The Durand Line was not carefully drawn. It cut through the Pathans or Pakhtoons as a whole, and through individual tribes and even families of them. Nor did the British ever pacify their side of it, except in patches or temporarily. But on maps, and in international usage, it became the dividing line between Afghanistan and British India.

When Britain withdrew from India her holdings in that quarter fell to Pakistan. The Pakistanis assumed that the Durand Line was their frontier, and they set out to make it good by pacifying the tribesmen short of it. So far they have done well in this—much better than the British before them—because all concerned are Muslims, because Pakistan has treated the tribesmen generously, and because she has shown creativity in her Northwest Frontier program as a whole.

The Afghans have not accepted her view, however. To them the Durand Line was never legal, or so they say, and it was not transferable from Britain to Pakistan. They have pressed historical arguments in their cause—too complex to set forth here—and have also backed the "Pakhtoonistan" movement, which seeks to make an independent country from Pakhtoon areas east of the Durand Line, in what is Pakistan on our maps. This movement holds real territory there, in the wilder parts of the mountains, and wages guerrilla war against Pakistan under such redoubtable leaders as the Faqir of Ipi. These men and their followers are spartan mountaineers who "know how to die" and can run up steep cliffs in the noon sun, even in middle age. They fought the British, and are fighting the Pakistanis, on the principle that no outsider should run their affairs.

Afghanistan's reasons for backing Pakhtoonistan—which she does with spirit—have been variously analyzed. Her own spokesmen say it is done from belief in self-determination. Pakistanis allege it is a blackmail racket, and a diversion to keep the Afghan people's mind off their poverty. Outsiders generally see it as a question of abstruse tribal politics. The Pakhtoons within Afghanistan are the dominant element there,

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supplying both the kings and the king-makers in modern times. They are linked with many Pakhtoons of Pakistan by feudal loyalties. These various Pakhtoons feel they have been engaged in a long, heroic struggle under Kabul's general leadership. The struggle is still alive, and any new setback in it is bitter, and a blow to Kabul's prestige. Therefore it must be fought by all real men, in the view of those involved.

A token setback occurred last spring when a new "one-unit" plan for West Pakistan was announced. This undertook to combine the various parts of West Pakistan—the Northwest Frontier Province, the Punjab, the Sind, etc.—under a single administration. The scheme was apparently aimed at balancing off the weight of East Pakistan—West Pakistan's dissimilar bedfellow—in internal politics, but Kabul began interpreting it well in advance as a blow at Pakhtoonistan.

When the plan was announced, therefore, mobs were allowed to attack and loot Pakistan's embassy at Kabul and her consulates at Jalalabad and Kandahar, two other Afghan towns. Karachi demanded redress, and a few days later a Pakistani mob was allowed to loot the Afghan consulate at Peshawar. Tempers grew hot. Pakistan kept on demanding satisfaction. The Afghans, who are landlocked, accused Pakistan of cutting off their mail, telegraph service and freight supplies. Pakistan recalled the wives of her officials in Afghanistan, and warned her citizens there. Kabul decreed a partial mobilization. And in this atmosphere the hints were made of Russian intervention.

The crisis has cooled off now, apparently, thanks to the good offices of some Muslim third parties, like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Perhaps it was never as frantic as it seemed in the press. But the blueprint for a war appears to be there still. The Afghans are proud. They seem capable of challenging the Pakistan army —a good modern force—but not of standing up to it for long. And if they take a beating their recourse is all too plain.

WHAT can America do to prevent such an explosion? Keep Russia in a non-expanding mood for one thing, perhaps. For another, we might try harder to take the Dead End curse off Afghanistan. We are not experts in Muslim politics, and perhaps never will be. The Pakhtoonistan quarrel seems over our head, and perhaps we should stay out of it—anyway we can hardly go against Pakistan, our good ally, in it. But we might take some heat off, in the long run, if we could help the Afghans join the modern world more fully. We might help ease their frustration that way, frustration no doubt being at the heart of their pugnacity.

We are giving Afghanistan some Point Four aid now, but our expenditure there is much smaller than in several other Asian countries—almost tiny compared with that in Iran and Pakistan, her two neighbors. It is only a minute fraction of what we have been spending on Indochina, many of whose people would prefer to be Communist and have us go away. The Afghans do not want to be Communist, apparently, and want us to stay around. They give every sign of hoping to join the larger world from which they have so far been excluded by fate—through being made a buffer, and through the aftermath of this.

Because of their history they are one of the poorest peoples in the world now, though their country has good natural resources—comparable to those of our own mountain states—and is not over-populated, like so many Asian countries. In our vision of leading the "Free World"—creatively rather than by force—we are supposed to be correcting things like this. There are many difficulties for such a course in Afghanistan. The people there have been isolated so long that they have trouble learning the simplest modern techniques, and they try the patience of our Point Four workers. This is not always like the patience of angels—and we Americans are not always too sympathetic toward Afghanistan, in fact, as individuals or as a nation. Presumably we must overcome this attitude if we wish to lead the world constructively.

If we do not, we can let the Afghans know they are outsiders still. And if they tire of that they will know where to turn.

MONDAY'S VISION

I SAW a gust of birds rise in a hurry of gale
like a moment mountain into the sun,
an avalanche of disappearance;
they caught my breath: I had to scale
a new alp in the imagination,
their wings created so much circumstance.

For a long sky I could not touch a level earth;
as their bright destination, I was found
close to much of marvel, as flesh to bone,
child and universe, each giving to other: birth:
like the chaste cord at the touch of immaculate
sound,
in the near distance between leaf and stone.

In a flight quick as their rise
I heard for a brief sun the song of those wings
astonish eden vanished in common clay
as if I pressed my face against the skies
and looked into the miracle heart of things
before I walked the level accents of day.

JOHN FANDEL.

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A Life for a Life?

VICTOR C. FERKISS

VIOLENCE on a mass scale is one of the distinguishing marks of the twentieth century. The holocaust at Hiroshima, the mass murder camps of the Nazis, characterize our age. Over us today hangs the shadow of nuclear destruction. That these circumstances have produced a change in our perspective is not surprising. Our zeal for reform seems to have been blunted, partly, perhaps, because our sensitivity to pain has been dulled by the magnitude of the pain inflicted during the past two decades, partly because the issue of simple race survival seems paramount. Nevertheless, some humanitarian causes still have champions; among these causes is the fight against capital punishment.

It is easy enough to sneer at the opponents of capital punishment, and many people do, classifying them with vegetarians, single-taxers and anti-vivisectionists as cranks at worst and at best thralls of the trivial and irrelevant. But the immense public excitement over the execution of a resisting murderess in England (where the whole issue of capital punishment has lately become something of a political football) and the long, dramatic struggle of a condemned but highly articulate California felon have managed to draw public attention to this problem once again.

Capital punishment is one of the oldest of human institutions, and it dies hard. In the Middle Ages a tendency toward lessening the severity of punishment did arise, under the auspices of the Church, but it was sharply checked with the rise of the nation state and the growth of towns. The commercial revolution brought in its wake severe social dislocations, and in a desperate effort to cope with the rising crime rate governments tended to make all felonies punishable by death. In England in the eighteenth century, for example, approximately two hundred offenses were at least theoretically punishable by death, although slavery and banishment were considered equivalent capital punishments. Oddly enough, English Utilitarians like Bentham, whose doctrines motivated many social reforms, held out for the death penalty on the ground that death is the worst of evils and fear of it the most profound of motives; hence they felt the death penalty was necessary as a deterrent to crime.

In more recent times the death penalty has had a checkered career. The generally humanitarian climate of recent centuries has led to its abolition in Italy, in most of Latin America and in a number of American states. Britain has vacillated—abolishing it under Labor and reinstituting it under the Conservatives. But perhaps even more important than these examples of formal abolition of capital punishment is the fact that even in those places where the death penalty is still on the books juries and judges are often noticeably reluctant to invoke it.

THE contemporary attitude toward capital punishment seems to be compounded of several elements which we rarely distinguish from one another. Important to our thinking about the question are certain notions about retribution and expiation, as well as the more widely acknowledged considerations of protecting society against convicted murderers and deterring would-be future criminals.

Our laws dealing with the punishment of criminals are based on the concept of retribution, the *lex talionis* of an eye for an eye. The idea of the repayment of a death by a death seems to be an outgrowth of the idea that certain offenses injure not only the victim but also society as a whole. Even today we say of a man who is being released from prison that he has "paid his debt to society." And—talk as we may about the purpose of punishment being the "correction" of the criminal or the deterrence of future crime—there continues to exist a widespread conviction (even though it is rarely expressed as such) that when a crime is committed society has suffered and someone must pay. Just how the execution of a criminal serves to reimburse society for the harm the criminal has done, though, is not easy to demonstrate. Obviously, the death of his murderer cannot bring the victim back to life nor provide food or clothing for his family; neither can it enrich society in any material way.

When the usefulness or desirability of capital punishment is discussed, however, the emphasis is usually on the practical. Here a curious division takes place. Popular opinion is almost solidly behind Bentham in assuming that capital punishment is an effective deterrent to crime, while professional criminologists are, if anything, even more solidly opposed to it as ineffective.

Mr. Ferkiss is a member of the faculty of St. Mary's College in California.

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The statistical evidence in this matter is diffuse and difficult to assay, but it is safe to say that there is as much evidence that a spectacular execution brings forth a wave of murders as there is that the abolition of the death penalty does so. Most murders are committed by psychopaths, professionals more concerned with immediate prospects of gain than with possible future apprehension, conviction, and execution, or by ordinary individuals who, after disposing of their wives in a fit of jealous rage, have no desire to kill anyone else. It is doubtful that the fear of death acts as a deterrent in any of these cases, and the use of the death penalty for crimes other than murder (now generally restricted to treason and in a scattered fashion to rape and kidnapping) has shown little evidence of reducing these offenses.

Actually, the certainty and immediacy of punishment are more important than its severity. Ineffective law enforcement, legal red-tape, and capricious laws or sentences probably make the existence of the death penalty far less of a deterrent than certainty of detection and sentencing to a lesser punishment would be. Crime of all kinds was rampant in Britain during the period when the death penalty was invoked most liberally; crime declined when Scotland Yard became an effective agency for sending men to prison. Given the current disordered state of American law, law enforcement, and the prison system, it is doubtful whether either the extension or the elimination of the death penalty would have any significant effect on the crime rate—a conclusion supported by the fact that the citizen is not noticeably safer in capital punishment states like California and New York than he is in Michigan and Maine, where there is no death penalty on the statute books.

EVEN if capital punishment does not serve as a specific deterrent to crime, is it perhaps an important symbol of the Christian attitude toward sin and atonement? The attitude of many Catholics toward moves to abolish capital punishment, for example, is undoubtedly conditioned in part by a not wholly unfounded fear of seeing a possibly good thing done for all the wrong reasons. It is of some interest in this connection that the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* attributes the gradual abandonment of the death penalty to a "contemporaneous secularization of thought, with the elimination of the ideas of sin and retribution." If the removal of capital punishment from the statute books were to mean a denial of the personal responsibility of a criminal for his crime and for its expiation, then Christians would surely be justified in opposing such a change. But is this in fact the case? Is it not more likely that by executing the criminal the rest of society is engaged in a spurious attempt to vindicate its own guiltlessness, the net result being an abdication of personal responsibility rather than its affirmation?

With that much said, it should at once be emphasized that the movement to abolish capital punishment is no panacea. The death penalty is only one element in a whole structure of penal practice which is in a thoroughly chaotic state. The concept of retribution, of an eye for an eye, which underlies our penal law, results both from a particular conception of what constitutes justice and from a healthy fear of an arbitrary judge. Now this concept has come to be overlaid, though not replaced, by the idea of prison as a place for reform, and as a result many sentences are "sliding." The indeterminate sentence, however, raises the specter of a government not by laws but by men, with crimes being punished not in accordance with a fixed schedule of punishments determined by a group of legislators representing the citizenry but by a judge acting at his own discretion.

Turning the prisoner over to a psychiatrist or social worker who views crime as a disease and the idea of justice as meaningless would be bad enough. Added to this is the fact that prison personnel are overworked and undersupported to the point where they frequently become cynical and brutal. All too often parole is as dependent upon political considerations and the physical capacity of the prisons as it is upon the prisoner's degree of rehabilitation. Most citizens know this, and the knowledge reinforces capital punishment because they fear the unchanged psychopathic murderer may eventually be released uncured.

Prisons, like schools and mental institutions, receive a minimum of the public's interest and funds. Abolishing the death penalty only to keep the convicted in what are schools of crime and injustice is hardly a desirable goal. Only when we decide just what it is that we want the punishment of public malefactors to accomplish, and then give vigorous and continuing support to whatever means are most likely to achieve this end, can we begin to hope for any adequate reform of our penal system. But in any thorough reform of our penal system, the death penalty will almost certainly go. The ancient loathing of the hangman bears testimony to our realization of the ambiguous nature of guilt and punishment and of the depth of the abyss beneath a society which rests on such a threat as the death penalty.

Today, barbarity overwhelms us from the front pages as well as from the comics, and the very fact that we live in an age of violence makes it more necessary than ever to curtail violence wherever we can. For, though we loathe the criminal and the hangman, we harbor some part of each within us. Bridling the lusts of the hangman within may be a first step toward bridling him in the larger social scene without.

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THE STAGE

THE SKIN OF OUR TEETH

MR. Thornton Wilder's millennial comedy remains the *jeu d'esprit* of the contemporary repertoire. "The Skin of Our Teeth," with its fey, lyrical presence, its anachronistic pleasures and burlesques, its subtle marriages of rowdiness and elevation, is not a work in the American grain. If not its passion, its wit—that air, as Miss Mary McCarthy has observed, of "a lark . . . a bright children's pantomime full of boldly costumed figures out of Bible History"—has been shaped by another architecture. There was, indeed, a special propriety in this play's being chosen as the center of the recent Salute to France Festival. A theatrical public tutored by Copeau and Dullin, by Cocteau, by Giraudoux and Barrault, must surely have responded to Mr. Wilder's gallant attempt to fashion a contemporary poetry of the theater out of the poor debris of the twentieth century.

The production which went to Paris, returned here for a brief engagement of great *réclame*, and then had some kind of apotheosis in the huge maw of television, was too random and unshaded to give a final pleasure. The flicker of tone and color—that constant oscillation between pathos and farce—was rarely marked in Mr. Alan Schneider's direction, and he quite blunted the wild, expressionistic violence of the second act curtain. Mr. George Abbott's Antrobus, carefully composed within its limits, was yet too dry and inflexible: nature itself should be in Antrobus' great rages, and in his despairs, we should sense the flagging of the threatening creative will. Miss Mary Martin's Sabina had a randy hoyden's charm, but the comic tone was too insistently forced: one heard no echoes, saw no shadows, and never felt—as I imagine audiences did with Miss Bankhead—the heady rush of anarchy. Miss Florence Reed's black incantations immensely buoyed up the second act, but the single large pleasure of the occasion was Miss Helen Hayes' faultless performance as Mrs. Antrobus. This role—that of the quintessential mother—lies well within Miss Hayes' rather circumscribed imaginative range, and she could not have created it with more fastidious and exact security, nor so continuously vital and nourishing a sense of detail. It was a performance which, once seen, could not be elided from the memory, and it was gratifying to find it so innocent of that ruthless personal appeal, that shameless assertion of personality which quite terribly blighted Miss Hayes' Maggie Wylie last winter at the City Center.

The play itself remains a jest without parallel in our literature for the stage. I alter this to read: a *grave* jest, for who would have thought, watching Mr. Wilder unroll the tapestry of time, that death had undone so many? There were moments, too, when I found myself wishing that gravity might be sustained and enforced: for something tentative and uneasy, shrill even, blurs the tone of "The Skin of Our Teeth." Is it not this (a wilful eccentricity) which has drawn for the play its ambiguous reputation—not the charming mammoths, nor the convocation of Moses and the Muses, nor the ebullient newsreels, nor the bingo parlor nor the Atlantic City convention of mammals? For the curious impression obtrudes that Mr. Wilder, a dramatist capable of such profound strokes—the Cain motif, to instance one, is superbly manipulated, with economy and power; the Fortune Teller's prophetic *aria da capo* has a tragic flux and rhythm uncommon in American writing— Mr. Wilder yet seems unwilling to permit his theme a full and serious statement. He bucks; he shies—suddenly (to mix metaphors) he is off the hook, and Sabina, that "maid of all work" (in more ways than one) diverts us from the point of tension. Sabina is, in Mr. Eliot's figure, that "nice bit of meat" with which the dramatist quiets the greedy conscious watchdog of the mind, while he stealthily goes about his real work of illumination and deceit. The trouble with Sabina is that she is rather *too nice* a bit of meat: enchanting, surely, the flick of her duster, the tilt of a cap and the twist of a tutu, but she almost seduces the play into disaster.

Or does the division lie, perhaps, in Mr. Wilder's "meaning" itself? In a mordant essay which followed the play's original production, Miss Mary McCarthy elected this view. It is not the Christmas spirit Wilder dramatizes, she argued, but a bowdlerized reading of it: without tension, austerity or grandeur. *Nostalgia* she found to be its mainspring: nostalgia for those "old Sunday evenings at home with the tinkling piano our Guide." Miss McCarthy's observation has its own truth for, very largely, it is the domestic principle which is enthroned in "The Skin of Our Teeth." Man may divert himself with pleasure, or inflate his spirit with the follies of wisdom. He may invent the wheel, separate *em* from *en* in the alphabet, brew beer; but night will fall, love sour, knowledge fade, and at the last he will take his way home to 216 Cedar Street where the Earth Mother (very probably from Appleton, Wisconsin) has his slippers ready by the fire and a nice pot of tea under the cosy.

Mr. Wilder, like all very good writers, is susceptible to parody, and I have lightly had my joke at his expense. The truth is that "The Skin of Our Teeth" defeats its domestic specter by what is so rare in our literature: the beauty and force of intellectual passion. Those adventures of the mind with which Mr. Wilder closes his play elevate it to a point of classically harmonious severity unique in American drama. Even his sentimentality—much of which seems to me de-

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fensible, because so obviously *earned*—is transfigured by this white light of spirit. Mr. Wilder has always been a writer of distinctive sensibility and flavor; his fictions of extravagant romantic sentiment, colored with piety, are among the genuine literary pleasures of the last thirty years. But he is peerless—here and in *The Ides of March*—when he writes, in passion and grief, of the cold pastures of eternity, and man's unconquerable mind.

RICHARD HAYES.

THE SCREEN

IN THE FORESTS OF THE NIGHT

PERHAPS I approached "The Night of the Hunter" with too great expectations. I had enjoyed the unusual novel by Davis Grubb, which alternated a poetic stream-of-consciousness style with compelling realism that accentuated the macabre theme; and its story (about two children pursued by an obsessed preacher who stops at nothing, not even murder, to get money for his cause) seemed a natural for the movies. Furthermore, the moviemakers concentrating on this strictly adult thriller gave great promise: Producer Paul Gregory and Director Charles Laughton who had worked together on several extraordinary stage presentations, now doing their first movie; Scriptwriter James Agee, whose understanding of films had been shown through the many years he served as a critic on *Time* and the *Nation*; and a cast headed by Robert Mitchum as the satanic preacher bent on acquiring money to build a tabernacle. Shelley Winters is his next victim, the mother of the two children and a widow whose late husband had stolen and hidden ten thousand dollars, with Lillian Gish as the good woman with whom the children take refuge after they run away from their evil stepfather.

Although "The Night of the Hunter" has been carefully thought out as a movie and is chillingly frightening at times, its total effect is too slick and glossy. The black-and-white photography of the Ohio River Valley is extremely handsome, but before the picture is half over, one becomes surfeited with its calculated prettiness as well as the carefully designed theater sets that are used as interiors. The film follows the book closely, perhaps too closely, and scenes that read well and stirred the imagination with their symbolism are obvious to the point of artiness when visualized. Shelley Winters and her neighbors seem almost stupid to be taken in by Mitchum as the malevolent itinerant preacher. While Director Laughton was particularly successful in guiding Billy Chapin as the ten-year-old who sees through Mitchum's evil machinations, he fails to make of Sally Jane Bruce, as Billy's still younger sister, anything more than a painted portrait of a child. What "The Night of the Hunter" lacks most of all, in spite of the good performances of Master Chapin and Miss Gish, is heart. It's strong on Art, but has a cool contempt for people.

THE Sherwood sisters, who a couple of years ago were the leading characters in a stage musical of "My Sister Eileen" called "Wonderful Town," are now back in a movie called, oddly enough, "My Sister Eileen." It's a musical too, and while it's not as fast-moving or as imaginative as "Wonderful Town," it has its bright moments and the cast seem to be enjoying every minute of Ruth McKenney's now-famous romp about the two girls from Ohio who make good in New York. Betty Garrett makes the bright sister very appealing, and Janet Leigh makes the less bright Eileen very pretty. Jack Lemmon, one of movies' best comedians these days, finally falls for Betty, and Robert Fosse, Tommy Rall and a lot of Brazilian cadets fall for Janet on first sight. Jule Styne's music won't exactly send you away singing, but the dances staged by Robert Fosse have a nice light quality appropriate to all this spoofing about Greenwich Village; and when "My Sister Eileen" isn't straining to be *risqué*, it turns up with some amusing entertainment.

AFTER her fling as a shrike, June Allyson is back as the home-and-husband-loving wife again in "The McConnell Story." Alan Ladd plays the husband for whom June keeps the home fires burning while he's away flying planes, but if you saw "Strategic Air Command," you are already familiar with the routine and you can imagine Alan's love for Piper Cubs, B-17s and jets; and you can imagine how June suffers on the ground each time Alan flies away. What you can't imagine, however, is all the inane dialogue that comes before and after all these beautiful shots of planes in flight.

PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

OF NOTE

PATRIOTISM AND RELIGION

THE September 16 issue of the St. Louis *Register* (4532 Lindell Boulevard, St. Louis 8, Mo.) carried an editorial differing with The Commonweal's recent statements on "Patriotism and Religion." The *Indiana Catholic and Record* of the same date (219

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East St. Joseph Street, Indianapolis 6, Ind.) published an editorial commenting on both The Commonweal's and the St. Louis *Register's* positions. We here reprint both editorials in full:

FROM THE *REGISTER*:

On this page we reprint The Commonweal's explanation of the stand taken on the lack of essential relationship between citizenship and religion. Our opinion is that this article cries out for the balance that comes from the use of distinctions.

The essential connection between religion and good activity does not mean that every Christian is completely good and every professedly non-religious man completely bad. Essential connection means that both the religious believer and the non-religious are in their nature and in their activity ordinated to God whether they profess that connection or not. Good activity means good by God's standard of the natural law. If there is some other standard in the natural order whereby activity can be adjudicated good or bad, we would like to know what it is, as there are some who do not accept this standard.

There are times when The Commonweal gives the uneasy feeling that there are points of issue that do not fit in the *philosophia perennis*. Statements are made where the impression is given that it does not make any difference whether this interpretation is philosophically justifiable or not.

The Commonweal is unique in the field of Catholic journalism in this country. Whenever courage is required on any issue, we shall look to The Commonweal to grasp the nettle. Our idealism needs the chastening influence of The Commonweal's realistic, factual approach. But we think too that a down-to-earth attitude requires the chastening guidance of a philosophy of ideas.

"No religious lines can be drawn on this question: one cannot separate the 'good' from the 'bad' citizen by any test of abstract philosophy or by any rule of revealed truth." It is one thing to say that the state in the field of civil rights cannot draw any religious lines on the question of good citizenship *directly*, but it is quite another thing to say that no religious lines can be drawn in any absolute, all-inclusive sense. It is within the competency of an abstract philosophy to make the judgment between good and bad, between true and false; otherwise, there is no such thing as abstract philosophy. We hope that we are not condescending when we say that we think The Commonweal would not deny that competency of abstract philosophy: a passion for civil rights need not blind one to the validity of philosophical thinking.

"Shall we talk in abstract principles, proving through a syllogism that religion makes men 'good' citizens and non-religion men who murder their brothers." Surely The Commonweal gives no evidence of comprehending the position we are attempting to defend. A false syllogism will lead to a stupid mistake, but the error does not destroy the validity of syllogistic thinking. Is The Commonweal afraid of syllogistic thinking? Shall we talk in abstract principles? How can we speak at all philosophically without being abstract?

We insist that distinctions must be drawn. To state that no religious lines can be drawn on good or bad citizenship is not an exact expression of truth. Philosophically lines can and must be drawn. Is The Commonweal willing to subscribe to a philosophy of indifferentism? We think not. Would The Commonweal state that it makes no difference what a man thinks is true, as long as here and now he does not place his error into action? We think not. Would The Commonweal subscribe to the position that truth constantly evolves, so that there is no fixed standard of truth? We think not. Then why in the name of all the holy civil liberties does not The Commonweal say so?

Indirectly, even the state draws a line between good and bad citizenship. There are conceivable circumstances where the spread of a fanatical religious philosophy is a distinct and present danger to the state and common good. As the state moves to protect itself, lines would be drawn not only *de jure*, philosophically, but also *de facto*, but *indirectly*. The state is not obliged to tolerate all religious philosophies in an absolute sense, without reservation. A fanatical sect that would actually threaten government by subversion could be restricted, not because this sect is religious, but because it is subversive. Russian Communism is a type of religion that attempts to make a heaven on earth. Would the state be competent to draw a line as to how far Communists may go in advocating ideas on the nature of man, ideas basically religious? Polygamy is a religious idea based on the Old Testament. Is the state competent to draw a line on polygamy?

Rightly, The Commonweal points out that there are many pages in history that we can lament. Rightly, The Commonweal emphasizes the horrifying gap between Christian ideals and Christian practice. But even here we feel that in the consciousness of our weakness we can concede too much to the impairment of truth. The enemies of Christianity will always make the taunt that Christians have not produced, but in all truth is there any other ethical system that has produced as much in human civilization? Of course Catholics and Christians have been guilty of horrible injustice, but is this picture completely balanced? Is there a complete inversion, so that those with the truth do not live it, and those without

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the truth go consistenly to their death fighting for justice? Could we dare to say that the Christian record is good, but could be better?

Multiply the Dreyfus case, Coughlin and McCarthy (as an aside, it must be conceded that not everyone agrees with The Commonweal stand on McCarthy and Coughlin) a hundred times over and what do we prove? That Catholics do not always live up to their principles and those professedly non-religious put us to shame. We readily grant that the atheist *de facto* is capable of virtue and grace. We have never denied it. We have pointed out that we are attempting to defend the Ethics of Aristotle who was neither Catholic nor Christian.

What is the attitude of The Commonweal toward the positive relationship between religion and citizenship? As unusual a source as Walter Lippman has said: "Though the political government is concerned primarily with the affairs of the existential world, though the churches are primarily committed to the realm of the spirit, they meet whenever and wherever there are issues of right and wrong, issues of what is the nature of man, of what is his true image, his place in the scheme of things, and his destiny. . . . But while the separation of the powers of the churches and of the state is essential to a right relationship between them, the negative rule is not the principle of their right relationship."

The Commonweal has expressed a negative point of view that seems to us to exclude a positive relationship between civil activity and religion. We agree with Mr. Lippmann that the negative rule is not the principle of their right relationship. We have stated the position of natural ethics that man is naturally religious, that his activity tends toward God as to an ultimate end. Good or bad activity must be judged by the standard of God's natural law. The Commonweal has not *explicitly* denied this philosophy; but neither has it affirmed it. What is the attitude of The Commonweal to secularism?

To avoid the charge of secularism and philosophical indifferentism, which can be as productive of evil as the abuse of civil liberties, The Commonweal, we think, should state its position concerning the positive relationship between civil activity and religion. "The negative rule is not the principle of their right relationship."

FROM THE *INDIANA CATHOLIC:*

It takes two to make a fight, but it's generally more interesting when a peace-maker joins the fray. With this in mind we would like to horn in on the dignified controversy in progress between The Commonweal and the St. Louis *Register* on the general subject of religion and citizenship.

It all began when The Commonweal appeared with a short editorial complaining about Catholic commencement speakers who say that to be a good American one must be religious. "We doubt that 'Americanism' has anything essential to do with religion," wrote the Catholic laymen who edit The Commonweal. And so there wouldn't be any doubt about what they meant, they added: "A good citizen may be a pagan, an agnostic or an atheist."

This appeared to be "secularism, not even thinly disguised," to the Catholic editors of the St. Louis *Register,* who developed in a series of editorials their own belief that religion is the indispensable prerequisite of good citizenship. The Commonweal's editors stuck by their guns and repeated their complaint against those "who imply that religious men have a monopoly on civic virtue . . . and that their non-believing neighbors are somehow subversive."

The editors of The Commonweal scored, we believe, with their simple appeal to history, past and contemporary, which demonstrates quite embarrassingly that agnostics and atheists have many times plainly outmatched the believers as good citizens in the fight for civic justice and respect for the rights and dignity of man. The facts, the Commonweal editors argued, should dissolve the "dangerous illusion that religion—even the one true religion—guarantees that its adherents will be possessed of some superior virtue and wisdom as citizens of an earthly city."

"The Catholic should be a great, a heroic citizen of the earthly city," the Commonweal editors admitted, "but this is an ideal, and one cannot speak as though it automatically were realized." And they concluded with a warning: "Let us not propagate a political heresy that apart from the guarantees of religious principle no civic virtue, no reasonable patriotism, is possible."

We are afraid that such a "heresy" has a lot to recommend it. What "reasonable" patriotism is possible to a man who doesn't believe in God? What reason has he for believing in the rights of man, or in duties, for that matter? Granted that there are good citizens who are atheists, how do they get that way? It is not their atheism that makes them good citizens. It is something else. And that something else is what the editors of the St. Louis *Register* are worried about.

Atheists and agnostics are good citizens because they are living on the cultural and ethical capital of religion they claim to have rejected. They have rejected the tree, but not all of its fruits.

Mind, we are happy that the unbelievers have retained the moral values which stem from religion, but we can't see that they are being particularly reasonable or logical. We think that it is evident, if one looks deeply enough, that apart from the guarantees of religious principle there actually is no reasonable patriotism possible. Logically there should be, then, no un-

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believing patriots. But men aren't strictly logical. There are some good citizens who are unbelievers. They didn't get that way by virtue of having no religious principles, but in exactly the same way the believer becomes a good citizen: under the influence of religious principles.

Doubtless the agnostic good citizen who puts the believers to shame by his devotion to justice and his interest in the common good finds some Catholic oratory and editorial writing extremely offensive for implying that only church-goers can be patriotic. And The Commonweal does well to come to his defense. But we would like to point out that it doesn't hurt the agnostics and atheists a bit to be reminded that their good citizenship finds its philosophical roots and its historical antecedents, and its present favorable climate all derived from religious principles.

It is the good friend of The Commonweal, Jacques Maritain, in his *Christianity and Democracy,* who points out clearly that "democracy is linked to Christianity and the democratic impulse has arisen in human history as a temporal manifestation of the inspiration of the Gospel."

"Not only does the democratic state of mind stem from the inspiration of the Gospel," Maritain warns, "but it cannot exist without it. To keep faith in the forward march of humanity despite all the temptations to despair of man that are furnished by history, and particularly contemporary history; to have faith in the dignity of the person and of common humanity, in human right and in justice . . . to have faith in liberty and in fraternity, an heroical inspiration and an heroical belief are needed which fortify and vivify reason, and which none other than Jesus of Nazareth brought forth in the world."

That is a truth that must be held up before our contemporaries, even at the risk of offending good citizens who don't realize why they are good.

(In a lead-editorial in this issue The Commonweal comments on the points that are raised by these two editorials.)

BOOKS

The Lesson of Captain Dreyfus

WILLIAM CLANCY

HISTORY has its moments of universality when, through some individual drama, the perennially basic issues of man and society are again brought on the stage for the world to consider and debate. At such moments the important things—the things that determine the course of civilizations and cultures—once more are made clear. And at such moments there is no possibility of indifference: men must choose sides; they must argue and perhaps end by fighting each other. For these are history's moments of transcendence, of grandeur, when pettiness and self-concern are lost in the majesty of some universal cause.

Ironically, such dramas need not—and often enough do not—involve a cast of thousands or even well-known performers. There may be only one or two men whose destiny is at stake, and these men may be obscure or even, in themselves, uninteresting. But this irony adds to the point, which is that the solution to great problems often hinges upon small factors, and that at history's greatest moments the merely individual and the petty are forgotten in a universal concern for larger things.

Certainly in our own country in our own time both the Sacco-Vanzetti case and the McCarthy dispute (in its major aspects) assumed at least the appearance of some universal cause. In both of these controversies the real question at stake was not of individuals as such but of issues fundamental to the procedures of a civilized society—issues of justice and prudence, of Man and the State. And in both of these controversies the nation was bitterly divided along ideological lines, even though many on both sides did not realize this fact at the time.

Those who wept when Sacco and Vanzetti died wept not so much for these poor men as for what they believed was the death of justice in Massachusetts. And in the McCarthy controversy the junior Senator from Wisconsin was actually quite unimportant. (Who cared, really, about McCarthy's income tax returns or his manners in debate?) What was important, urgently important, was the problem for which Senator McCarthy served as an uncomprehending symbol—the problem of individual rights vs. some form of total security. Joseph R. McCarthy's pathetic function was to make this problem a matter for national argument. He himself probably never realized what the argument was all about.

In this, he had his forbears in history—men whose individual destinies came to determine the course of national destinies without their ever comprehending

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what was really going on. In the Dreyfus Affair, perhaps the most significant and bitterly argued political-moral drama of modern times, Alfred Dreyfus himself never understood what had aroused the passions of the world and divided men into hostile camps. To him it was merely a question of his military superiors' having been "misinformed," and his only concern was to set the record straight and thus vindicate the honor of the French army as well as his own. When the affair was finally over, after years of the most terrible and universal bitterness, Léon Blum wrote that Dreyfus, had he not been Dreyfus but someone else, would not even have been a Dreyfusard. Late in his life, when someone spoke to Dreyfus about the historic role he had played in focusing the world's attention on fundamental questions of human rights, he protested: "No, no. I was only an Artillery officer prevented by a tragic error from following my career. Dreyfus, the figurehead of justice, was not I; he was created by you."

But though Alfred Dreyfus himself could not understand what his case meant—and continues to mean—to civilized society, it is important that the rest of us understand, that we do not forget lessons that were so hardly learned. *Captain Dreyfus: The Story of a Mass Hysteria,* a new book by Nicholas Halasz,* provides the occasion for recalling and again rehearsing one of the central problems of modern times—one which has never been finally resolved and one over which we remain divided today. As long as the problem of Man versus the State remains a problem, the Dreyfus Affair, its classic prototype, will remain a current event.

THE facts of the Dreyfus Affair can be briefly summarized. Following France's humiliating defeat by Germany in 1870, there was widespread fear of German espionage in French political circles. This fear was fully justified, and in order to save its own skin the French government decided that traitors must be quickly found. In 1894, therefore, on the most flimsy evidence and after a military trial behind closed doors, Alfred Dreyfus, an unknown Jewish officer of the French General staff, was convicted of espionage for Germany and sentenced to lifelong deportation to Devil's Island. The nation's fears of espionage were thus quieted. The traitor, it was believed, had been found—and he was a Jew, so, people said, one might have expected such a thing all along.

Two years later, in 1896, however, Colonel Picquart, head of the Information Division of the French General Staff, became convinced, after a careful survey of the evidence, that Dreyfus was innocent and that the real traitor was not a Jew but a French aristocrat, Major Count Walsin-Esterhazy. The Colonel quickly informed his superiors of his belief. They were dumbfounded and outraged. Why, they demanded to know, was he concerned about this obscure Jew? After all, they argued, the honor of the French army and the security of the French State were involved. Both would be undermined if this case were reopened and an admission of error made. Colonel Picquart, therefore, was conveniently removed to a dangerous post in Tunisia.

Picquart's conscience could not be so easily dismissed, however, and he publicized the facts he had discovered. Soon, agitation for re-examination of the evidence was begun. In 1897 Clemenceau began to fight for a revision of the verdict and, soon afterwards, Zola published his mighty *J'accuse*.

WHAT happened then is history. Not only France but the whole civilized world became divided into the camps of Dreyfusards and anti-Dreyfusards. In the words of Mr. Halasz:

*CAPTAIN DREYFUS: THE STORY OF A MASS HYSTERIA. By Nicholas Halasz. Simon and Schuster. $3.50.

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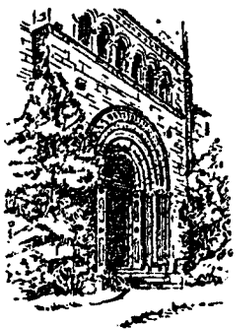

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So began a morality play that was to achieve a grandeur unparalleled in the history of the modern state and make France examine in fire and in fear the bedrock upon which democracy is founded. The sanctity of the individual, yes. A noble ideal, no doubt. But as a practical matter, should the whole be sacrificed for the minutest part? Is the moral vindication of one Frenchman worth jeopardizing the security of all Frenchmen?

In facing the question France, the nation of reason, went out of her mind. Normal life stopped. Only a handful of men retained faith in the ability of democracy to provide security for all. The rest had faith only in the State and its Army, and went into paroxysms over any act that reflected on it. In the words of a contemporary writer, "Heroism was needed even to utter the word justice. To protest against the violation of right was made out a crime, and to doubt the infallibility of a military court was considered treason."

The Dreyfusards throughout the crisis were a passionate minority. Against them stood masses of French opinion which demanded no sympathy for "traitors" and "death to the Jews." Against them also stood the French State, which was determined that this case must not be reopened—that, whatever mistake had been made, the "honor" of the French Army must be preserved from any suggestion of corruption. On the one hand were those who believed that the rights of the individual, even the most obscure individual, are worth more than the prestige of any State; on the other were those who believed that, come what may, the principle of authority must be preserved—and that one individual injustice counts for nothing against the security of an entire nation.

The Affair rocked the world for twelve years. After twelve years the Dreyfusards won. Dreyfus was pardoned in 1899 and finally, in July, 1906, he was acquitted of all charges by the Court of Appeals. But in those twelve years, in the words of Mr. Halasz, "the handful of men who fought for the truth and thus for the restoration of the human ideal as a fortress stronger than any army were defamed, cursed, despised, physically attacked, despoiled of their honors, their offices, jailed, driven into exile . . . In the end they forced their will on a nation that had become an anarchic mob and returned it to the rule of law. But memorable years of horror and grandeur separated them from that consummation."

WHAT was the Dreyfus case fought over? It is clear that, whatever the particular motivation of

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men on both sides, the real issue which rocked the world in this struggle was the issue of individual justice versus national security, the issue of the rights of the human person versus the demands of authority. This is the issue which gave the case its grandeur, its universality, its eternal relevance.

"What matters this man's fate?" is a question that will always be asked—and it will always receive bitterly opposed answers. In his September 21 syndicated column "Today in Washington," for example, David Lawrence suggests that recent Soviet espionage in the United States and in Britain was made possible "because the atmosphere was poisoned by the specious claim that individual rights are sacrosanct—as if any individual rights could ever supersede the right of the State to protect itself against subversion, sabotage or treason."

Here is the Dreyfus problem again, and it is clear where Mr. Lawrence stands on it. But there are those who would disagree with him violently, passionately, to the death, if necessary—men who would insist that basic human rights may never, must never, be violated, whatever the excuse; and that the State which would violate them in the name of "security" or of anything else is a State not worth preserving. These were the men—Colonel Picquart, Clemenceau, Zola, Jaurés—who fought for Alfred Dreyfus as for an abstract principle without which no nation's life is worth living. And against them stood all who made Authority the cardinal principle of political life.

In her brilliant essay on the Dreyfus Affair in *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Hannah Arendt points out that the Dreyfusards succeeded in winning over large sections of all classes to their cause—except one. "The Catholics," she observes, "reacted as a bloc; among them there was no divergence of opinion." The entire French Catholic press led the fight against any reopening of the Dreyfus case. And, as Miss Arendt says, even "more striking . . . than the attitude of the Catholics in France was the fact that the Catholic press throughout the world was solidly against Dreyfus." Why this shameful fact? Why were Catholics alone united in support of the anti-Dreyfusard cause?

The answer seems to lie in the Catholic's terrible temptation to ignore the structure of individual problems for the sake of some general principle. Nineteenth century Catholic opinion hated what the French Revolution represented. Nineteenth century Liberals opposed the Church. Dreyfus was defended by Liberal heirs of the Revolution: therefore, Catholics apparently reasoned, Dreyfus *must* be guilty.

As Mr. Halasz puts it, during the Dreyfus Affair "the Catholic press went straight to the heart of the matter. The Great Revolution was described as an insurrection of man against God and was called the original sin of the century." Catholic opinion thus saw the defeat of Dreyfus as a means for avenging itself on the anti-religious, Liberal world, and it stopped at practically nothing in its attempts to vilify Dreyfus and those who defended him. Catholics somehow equated the guilt of Dreyfus with the guilt of the modern world. By a perversion of logic they seemed to reason that because the modern world was guilty, Dreyfus was guilty. And because Catholics overwhelmingly stood for "authority" against the revolutionary "rights of man" they spared no effort to uphold the authority of the French State against those who they believed would undermine it in this affair.

One French priest put the majority Catholic position forcefully in an address at a college festival at the height of the Affair:

> When I speak of the necessity of a nation to arm itself with power I mean the material power that does not reason, but imposes itself—the power of which the Army is the most forceful expression, the power of the cannon, which is the ultimate argument of statesmen and of nations . . . The enemy is intellectualism which professes to disdain power. Turn the point of the sword against it. Woe to the government that veils its weakness behind a supposed insufficiency of legal powers and lets the sword drop. The country in the grip of anxiety will reject those who refuse to save her even at the price of bloodshed.

WITH the ultimate vindication of Dreyfus the Republican-Liberal cause was strengthened and the "rights of man" were reestablished as the recognized basis of French law. The authoritarians who had sought to establish their case on the conviction of one man were thus routed. Clemenceau, bitter from the struggle, was determined that never again should clerical influence be felt in the French State, and he caused the violently anti-clerical laws of the early twentieth century to be enacted. Those who had made intolerance and injustice part of their cause were rewarded with intolerance and injustice. Thus it always was, and thus it will always be.

But whatever later injustices they perpetrated, much can be forgiven those who fought for this Jewish captain. In the face of national hysteria they achieved a transcendent victory. Heroically, they rescued the impartiality of law from mob passion, and against the massed opposition of prejudice they vindicated the individual's inviolable rights. As one of them, Jean Jaurés, wrote: "What matter the errors of fate and false directions of life? A few luminous and fervent hours are enough to give meaning to a lifetime."

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Thomas Mann's Last Novel

CONFESSIONS OF FELIX KRULL, CONFIDENCE MAN. By Thomas Mann. Translated by Denver Lindley. Knopf. $4.50.

By HENRY POPKIN

FELIX Krull embodies equally the qualities of civilization and roguery. His adventures suggest that the two are somehow allied, or at least, that a sufficient veneer of civilization enormously simplifies the rogue's task. To convey such an idea is an ironic last function for Thomas Mann's great store of humane learning. After fueling the intellectual discussions of *The Magic Mountain,* furnishing the endless details of *Joseph and His Brothers,* and contriving an antique language for *The Holy Sinner,* Mann's personal culture arrived at this final joke on itself. Culture becomes at last one of the tools of a confidence man, a tool handled so perfectly that any proper appreciation of it is out of the question.

The rogue who is the hero of this novel is a relatively inoffensive member of the picaresque tradition. He always avoids the appearance of leaping at opportunities. He merely waits his turn, and when opportunity comes, he grasps it firmly by enveloping it in his invincible charm. Until then, he is patient and passive where a more direct approach might be expected. And yet, he is a matchless egotist who sees the process of evolution as "striving toward me from the grey reaches of antiquity." The restraint he keeps on his egotism reflects the role of civilization in its service to roguery.

Most of Krull's effort is directed toward preparing in advance for whatever part he might be called on to play. The novel makes much of his histrionic talents, his early career as a model for his godfather's paintings, and his sympathetic recognition of the artistry of stage, circus, and bull ring; but, except for the times he feigns illness as a truant child and as a military recruit, he has only one main characterization in his repertoire. He is courteous and cultured, whether as a waiter or a marquis. His "civilized" pose is the product both of destiny and of intense training. Krull has educated himself by practicing disguises, developing his talent for forgery, memorizing the contents of fashionable shop-windows, picking up foreign languages. Once this training is complete, he need not seem ever again to make an effort.

As he never tires of telling us, he is chosen: "I could not conceal from myself that I was made of superior stuff, or, as people say, of finer clay." His handsome person and his winning manner are proofs that he has been singled out. His talent is clearly the fulfillment of his chosenness: "you could go so far as to say that one who is chosen learns even in his sleep." He must be chosen, since the people he meets are continually choosing him. He is so attractive, brilliant, and well-mannered that he inspires a remarkable series of invitations to rise in the world; he even gets more invitations than he can accept. Although he may make the negative contribution of an occasional rejection, he seldom needs to undertake anything to further his own progress.

In general, others fashion his fate, while Krull remains effortless in appearance and often in fact. He always gives people what they want, sometimes gently pushing them into wanting what he wants. Thus he maneuvers the committee examining him for military service into rejecting him; he begins his interview with ardent assertions of his eagerness to serve but then stumbles into seemingly inadvertent revelations of his incapacity. When he commits theft, we learn later that his victim really wanted to be robbed. A middle-aged woman pursues him, and he gives into her. (Krull is like Mann's Joseph in his attractiveness to older women.) When he reveals himself to be a thief, she is delighted and begs him to rob her. By agreeing to impersonate a marquis on a world tour, he gives the marquis what he wants. When he writes home eloquent accounts of his triumphs, he gives

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his grateful "parents" more than they ever expected from their scapegrace son. If he exerts himself a bit to court a girl in Portugal, he still acts with necessary caution and with apparent passivity. Even so, his destiny is the path of least resistance, not the way of exertion. He courts the girl but wins her mother. Such are the advantages of seeming to have a liberal education.

Krull's aristocratic culture is more than a pose; it is a nervous itch. Rising from grubby surroundings, he proclaims his loyalty to that natural aristocracy to which he belongs. He tells the marquis (who is an aristocrat only by descent, not by nature): "It's not my custom, my dear marquis, to take life as a joke. Frivolity is not my style, especially in the matter of jokes; for certain jokes are pointless if they are not taken seriously." When he defends the social order before the King of Portugal, the king observes that he is one of the very few intelligent spokesmen for orthodoxy. He speaks with such solemn elegance that he is often, as he confesses, talking like a book. In his love-making, he demands a poetic vocabulary, complete with "overflowing orbs." Accordingly, the novel itself is composed in the heavy, elegant style that Mann loved so well. This is the magisterial, elder-statesman manner that sometimes peeps through in the *Joseph* novels, full of sly, parenthetical humor, occasionally varied by rhapsody and oratory. The pretentiousness of Krull the narrator permits Mann a field day. All the ornateness of his style is justified on the basis of dramatic necessity.

This ceremonious, self-indulgent eloquence is used to show up the "civilization" it exhibits. A major theme is obviously suggested by the ready acceptance which the bourgeois adventurer wins posing as an aristocrat. Like Shaw in *Pygmalion*, Mann is implying that an aristocracy which can so easily be taken in is not very securely based. Krull's serious view of his calling as a confidence man recalls Brecht's assorted criminals in *The Three-Penny Opera;* their workmanlike attitude mocks the more conventional trades and professions, and so does Krull's. But most of this social criticism merely lies strewn about *Felix Krull.* There is no synthesis, no effort to pull any of these issues into a significant relationship. The central incidents become, finally, filling between thick-cut slices of the soggy magisterial style.

Some allowance has to be made for the book's (now permanently) unfinished state, since Krull is constantly promising us a much longer narrative. Curiously, from a short fragment, *Felix Krull* has now become no more than a long fragment illuminated by a few priceless incidents—Krull and his draft board, Krull and the middle-aged woman who wants to be degraded, Krull and the King of Portugal. The interstices are less precious. We can be sure that Mann's permanent reputation will continue to rest on the more solid structures he built years ago.

Revolution

CHINA UNDER COMMUNISM. By Richard L. Walker. Yale University Press. $4.50.

By MICHAEL HARRINGTON

THERE is probably no political dispute in American life which is as fantastic as the debate over China. The question has been passionately argued, it has played an important role in a Presidential campaign, and almost every candidate for office in the land has a position on it. And yet, with all this discussion, there is little that can pass for information, especially on the victory of Mao and the Stalinists.

Richard L. Walker's *China Under Communism* is a useful book in the sense that it is a serious, scholarly and documented study. It takes up the nature of the state apparatus, the position of the workers and the peasants, the land program, the use of terror, etc. Walker is sometimes assertive and definitive when his evidence is not, yet on the whole he has made a readable summary of the available information. His final description of Chinese Stalinism is both concise and realistic.

Walker writes, ". . . only five years after coming to power the Communists have laid the foundations for a great new type of oriental despotism approaching 'general slavery.' It is an apparatus of total compulsion in the hands of a 'monopoly bureaucracy.' Among the essential features are complete centralization of control over the economy, slave labor, massive military and police organizations, and ability to mobilize and control the whole population."

In spelling this out, Walker gives a fairly detailed picture of the position of the various groups within the state and a truly frightening description of the efficiency with which the Stalinists use their propaganda techniques. I would question his assumption that Chinese Stalinism "has the power to mobilize its great human resources for undertaking vast projects," but his general analysis of the totalitarian nature of the society is excellent.

However, when Walker comes to consider "The Challenge of Communist China," and in particular how America should respond to that challenge, he wastes the advantage which his scholarship has given him. His political point of view is that of a not-too-critical supporter of American foreign policy in Asia, and this leads him to some extremely questionable positions. Thus, after having described the sorry record of American support of feudalism, colonialism and *status quo* capitalism in Asia, he writes, "[this support] has frequently enabled critics of America to portray it as backing 'reaction' and militarism in Asia. Such beliefs have naturally been of great assistance to Mao and his colleagues."

But are these critics merely "portraying" America as supporting reaction in Asia? Or hasn't American policy on Indochina, where it supported Bao Dai and the French, Korea, where it supports Syngman Rhee, China-Formosa, where it

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supports Chiang, Thailand, where it supports Songgram—hasn't this policy been *in fact* a backing of reaction and militarism in Asia? All of Walker's book would seem to enable him to understand that the charge of imperialism which Mao directs against America is successful in Asia because it is true (the basic charge, that is, and not Mao's embellishments such as germ warfare). And yet it is precisely on this crucial political point that he flounders.

In Harold Isaacs' brilliant study, *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution,* there is a much more realistic political conclusion. Isaacs writes, "It is perhaps the ultimate paradox of all this history that the hopes for future world growth on a humanly tolerable basis still lie with the Western world, which did so much to bring Asia to its present pass, and, above all, with the United States, which has inherited the world Europe so largely made. The question is whether it is capable of breaking away from the limited national capitalism of the past and leading the way into a gigantic and revolutionary effort to bridge the economic gap between the continents on the basis of the socialized use of resources and the creation of new democratic institutions. . . ."

In Walker's book, there is a telling description of what happens when such a democratic alternative is not forthcoming, of the terrible revolution in China which has resolved the problem with totalitarianism. It is unfortunate that Walker does not proceed from this clear understanding of the structure of the regime to a realization of the responsibility which America and the West, as social systems and not as conspirators, must bear for its existence; and of the necessity for a new, democratic policy toward Asia and China.

REVIEWERS

William Clancy is associate editor of The Commonweal.

Henry Popkin is a member of the faculty at Brandeis University.

Michael Harrington is a frequent contributor to this magazine.

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To the Point

At the moment the news is full of items of special interest to The Commonweal and its readers. We mention only four: the ousting of dictator Perón, the Bryant murder trial in Mississippi, the new tack in the Kremlin line the world over (which recalls the days of the Popular Front) and the unsettled prospects for the 1956 elections. Less dramatic but of key importance is the growth of this conviction among Americans: unless we find out how to transplant it to other lands, our present national prosperity is not fated to endure.

These are typical of the issues The Commonweal will be examining in the next few months. In addition, there is the magazine's stimulating approach to ideas generally, and to the arts, as exemplified in Richard Hayes' evaluation of the varying productions of the Broadway season, the weekly movie commentary of Philip T. Hartung and the whole range of The Commonweal's literary articles and reviews of the latest books.

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